

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Monday, January 24, 2005
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HELP Committee Chairman Enzi, Ranking Member Kennedy, Hail
Senate's Confirmation of Spellings as President's Secretary of Education

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee) today joined Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist to introduce legislation to strengthen public education, and support a “lifetime of learning opportunities for students at all stages in life.

Enzi, the newly-elected Chairman of the HELP Committee, said the bill will help ensure a bright future for the nation's children by setting high expectations and raising achievement for all students, regardless of their background.

“As our bill will demonstrate, we believe all students can learn. More importantly, with the right support, all students also can be star achievers,” Enzi said. “We want to make sure every child's life is a success story and every school provides our children with the skills they will need to achieve their version own of the American Dream, regardless of their background.”

Enzi emphasized that the bill aims to create a stronger link between education and the workforce by strengthening the role of public educational institutions in the Federal workforce preparation effort, including our community colleges.

Businesses are creating and filling good jobs with good candidates, we want to make sure we're filling those jobs with American workers.

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We know that measuring student achievement has helped to improve student achievement.

This is part of creating high expectation. When we set a challenging goal for ourselves, our children, parents and teachers, we want to make sure we're making progress. If we're not, we want to know how we can do better.

We can help our teachers serve their students better by reducing the amount of time they spend outside the classroom. Federal program requirements should not work against the goals we've set of improving student achievement.

That needs to be a common theme in all federal education programs.”

Enzi said bill also includes, language to reauthorize the “Workforce Investment Act,” and will support the needs of business , including small businesses, who are looking for skilled workers by This

This bill can help train 900,000 workers. It will give American workers the skills they need to compete – and succeed – for the good jobs being created. This legislation will respect to math, science, and reading skills," said Enzi. Mr. ENZI: Mr. President, I rise to introduce legislation with the distinguished Majority Leader, Dr. Frist, and my friend and colleague from Tennessee, Senator Alexander.

The legislation we are introducing today is about ensuring a bright future for our children. It is about strengthening our public education system and ensuring parents are involved. It is about giving teachers the support they need.

In this body, in a bipartisan process, we approved the No Child Left Behind Act. That legislation made high expectations for all public school children the center of federal education policy. Those high expectations have had results. Children all over the country, and many minority children, are reading better.

They are doing math better. In another two years, when science is included in the state assessments, I believe students will do better in that subject, too. Four years ago, when we passed the No Child Left Behind Act, we did what was needed to improve student achievement, and we are seeing the results.

Despite this success, there's still more room for improvement. According to the most recent National Assessment of Education Progress, over 25 percent of twelfth grade students could not read at grade level. Only two thirds of students entering ninth grade are expected to complete high school within four years. We need to stick to the goals we've set.

We want to make sure we continue to set high expectations and raise achievement for all students, regardless of their background. This needs to be a common theme in all federal education programs. All students can learn. All students need to be taught with that goal in mind.

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serve their students better by reducing the amount of time they spend outside the classroom. Federal program requirements should not work against the goals we've set of improving student achievement.

It's important to provide flexibility for States to manage Federal program dollars most effectively. We need to let leaders at the State and local level make the important decisions about this country's education, because they're at ground level.

The Federal government continues to provide only a fraction of education spending in this country. For K-12 education, the federal investment is still around 8 percent. The rest of the money comes from states and local districts. We need to trust these educators to work on behalf of the children in their charge. We must continue to give these educators the tools they need to serve their students and help all children succeed.

We also want to support a lifetime of learning opportunities for students at all stages in life. Education is changing; the way we approach learning is changing. Federal programs should reflect these changes. Last year, more than seventy percent of college students were considered "non-traditional." Our education system needs to address the needs of adult learners, as well as children who take the more "traditional" track in education.

Enzi emphasized that the bill also aims to create a stronger link between education and the workforce. Businesses are creating and filling good jobs with good candidates, we want to make sure we're filling those jobs with American workers.

It is estimated that sixty percent of tomorrow's jobs will require skills that only twenty percent of today's workers possess. It is also estimated that the average worker leaving college today will switch careers fourteen times in their life, and ten of those careers haven't been invented yet.

That suggests we need a system in place that can support a lifetime of education, training, and retraining. As tomorrow's workers change careers, they will need support to learn new skills, or learn to apply their current skills in new ways. Our postsecondary institutions will play a critical role in supporting these students, as they do now through a number of federal education programs.

High School dropouts are the most at-risk school population in the workforce. We must look at federal efforts to reform high schools to make sure we are keeping students in school. We need to make sure that students are leaving high school with a diploma, a quality education, and the strong foundation of reading, writing, math and science skills that will help them succeed in the workforce.